



EDUCATOR OF THE PEOPLE
OF MORGAN COLLEGE
CALTO.







IDLE MOMENTS

CONTAINING

EMANCIPATION

AND OTHER

POEMS

BY

D. WEBSTER DAVIS,



With an Introduction by
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INTRODUCTION.

This volume of poems from the pen of a mind endowed of God with rich fancy, which has been fertilized by liberal culture, patient industry, and that tact which makes most of opportunities, is presented to the public as an illustration of of the dialect or patois of a part of the Negro race whose ancestry was nearer Africa than the class represented in age and opportunity by the writer of them.

These poems are tradition and history in dialect or patois. These poems show the power, continuity and tenacity of race under circumstances the most adverse and the most untoward, as to its preservation of type and language, the outgrowth of a condition the race was powerless to relieve itself from, but which unconsciously stamped itself upon the people of thousands of miles of territory of a race foreign to the Negro race.

Much that is best in the American Negro is traditional. All that is worst is historical. and not of his writing.

In these poems the author has faithfully preserved the dialect and something of the folk-lore of the Negro American. The writer was born and reared in his loved Virginia. He came upon the scene just as the clouds and mists were rolling away. This nearness to slavery, this environment throughout his useful life as student and educator, makes these poems the more to be admired as a "counterfeit presentment," not alone of how the southern Negro talked in days of slavery but of how the southern whites talked, of how all the people, in the rural parts of the South talk now.

A peculiarly noticeable and interesting fact as to the physical strength of the Negro race type, all may see in the colored people, though the stream of Negro blood be so shallow as to be discernable only in the octoroon; yet the Negro is stamped indelibly in this class, in features, in hair or in some prominent race peculiarity. So also is the strength of impression made upon the English language of America, as marked and as distinctive in the dialect of all the people of the South Atlantic and the South and Southwestern States, without distinction of race.

There is no purpose to do Africa and our ancestry the injustice of implying that the language of the plantation is an African language, or, an African provincialism, any more than to say that the plantation patois is English.

The great majority of Negroes brought from Africa into the colonies and later into the States of the United States, were, judged by appearances, features of an inferior type from most of the races of that region, in the main, were Congo Africans, and brought with them their maternal language, the Congo, between which and the language of Europe there exists the greatest dissimilarity. Those not natives to the Congo region, were from interior and coast tribes. Now all the original immigrants were, by the system of traffic peculiar to American slavery, scattered throughout the colonies and the States.

The effect of this separation upon their language was plainly shown in their adherence to the accentuation of it, to the peculiarity of pronunciation of English words, a peculiarity inseparable from the bent of their mother tongue, their African languages.

These peculiarities of speech were transmitted from father to son in an unbroken line of centuries.

Yet so strong have been the cords and chains of language, where the race has been most numerous, that the

training of the schools, has not been able to break the hold of paternal speech, an admixture of African accentuation grafted upon European languages—as spoken in the United States.

One illustration will serve to make plain the fact now dwelt upon. There appears to be no race of Europeans, the English excepted, who pronounce the Greek *thata*, as the ancient Greeks did. There is no African who has reached his majority in Africa whom I have heard of, who can pronounce as did the Greeks and Anglo-Saxons, *thata*, *th*.

In this matter of pronunciation there is between Africans in Africa, and French, Spanish, Portuguese, Italian and North Europe peoples this similarity, an inability to make the sound *th* as in English. These races for *th*, say *d*. Hence the patois of the plantation is *dat*, *dis* and *dem*, for *that*, *this* and *them*. What Frenchman, born and reared in France, can say, theatre, as the Greeks of old or Anglo-Saxon of to-day, or the Arab would pronounce it? So difficult is this sound to make that, in teaching Arabic, the *that*, *d*, of Arabic, has by grammarians been changed to *dal* in the Arabic grammar used in Africa.

The Anglo-Saxon Americans who were born and reared, and who lived among the blacks from infancy to old age heard the jargon or patois of the Negro in his frantic effort to overcome the hereditary limitations of his own language, more frequently than the purity of England's English spoken, and unconsciously, the provincialisms in speech of the blacks have been stamped upon the English of the South whether Southerners (whites) would have it so—or otherwise, and the infection is upon their speech.

Hecrein is an anomaly, the power and influence of an inferior people over the speech of a superior race.

The word inferior is here to be taken as adventitious, and not as natural. The Negro race in America to-day, is

to the whites—inferior from circumstance rather than anything inherent in soul and brain. The progress already made shows this beyond cavil or controversy. Let us hope that this progress which does not make us vain, but grateful to God, is but the initial step to a better civilization than we have known.

The crudities of speech portrayed in these poems, in some—will provoke laughter, in some contempt, and not infrequently—offend the sensitiveness of some; and yet they serve to remind us of the misfortunes of our ancestry, and the cruelties of an alien people. But the progress made and being made by us in learning—convinces us that this patois is not natural to the American blacks, but simply marks the transition of African illiteracy to an alien tongue. A hundred years hence when illiteracy among Negroes of America shall be less pronounced than it is among the masses of the whites—now, this patois will prove interesting and amusing to our posterity—whose command of English and European languages will not be inferior to that of the American scholarly class of to-day.

This part of Negro tradition and history so well preserved in verse by the muse's spirit breathed into these poems, serves to convince us that if this work is to be best done, most faithfully retained to us, the source and means must be Negro and not Caucasian.

Phyllis Wheatly of a century ago, Paul Dunbar and Daniel Webster Davis of to-day, are poets whose race identity may not be questioned, and are race representations in literature, showing the world that the muses like the gods of past ages delight to disport themselves among the gentle Ethiopians.

JOHN H. SMYTHE.

902 Seventh street, N., Richmond, Va.

DEDICATION.

To my beloved and Sainted Mother, Charlotte Ann Christian, whose loving care and tender sympathy has made me all that I am, this volume is most lovingly dedicated by

THE AUTHOR.



D. WEBSTER DAVIS.

PREFACE.

A serious injustice is done an author when his friends and enemies fail to read his preface. I trust that my friends may at least do me the justice to read why I venture to send these poems forth to the public.

To attempt to write poetry is very generally considered an indisputable evidence of a mild form of insanity, and yet I presume to trust that such is not my case.

No man should trust himself before the public unless he has written something that the public ought to hear, or something that the public wants to hear, and he himself should not constitute that public.

As to the first, I dare not say; as to the second, many have so expressed themselves.

But even with the fear of public criticism, and possibly public censure, I commit myself to its tender mercies.

So many have asked for copies of "Emancipation" and other of my poems; the public press has spoken so kindly of them, that I indulge the hope that they may meet some favor.

Perhaps some line may cheer and help a struggling brother, or bring some light and gladness into a stricken heart; but anyway, no line can bring ought but pleasure, as I believe a deep sense of the good, the beautiful and the true can be found on every page. Should the rhyme, the meter or the lines offend they at least are written from the heart.

Your humble and obedient friend,

THE AUTHOR.

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IDLE MOMENTS.

Emancipation.

[Read at the Emancipation Exercises at True Reformers' Hall, Richmond, Va., January 1, 1892.]

Blest freedom! 'tis the sweetest strain that fills the human
heart,
Its blessings must delight the soul, and sweetest joys impart;
The feathered songsters of the globe were mute if caged
in gold,
And, though in rags, the heart, free, beats in ecstasy untold.

Upon the ocean, calm and deep, a lordly vessel sails.
She bears upon her swelling breast twenty human slaves;
Far from their native land to dwell, beneath an alien sky,
Far from that dear and sunny home where Africa's waters
lie.

She landed on Virginia's shore, just where we stand to-day,
And gaze upon a lovely group, clad in bright array.
And mem'ries strong and deep arise, and quick the tear-drops
spring,
As we think of what to-day we are, and what we late have
been.

But yesterday, and dark the cloud that hung above our sky:
To-day 'tis past, and, full of joy, the tears of gladness rise.
The day we longed and prayed for sore, at last has blessed
our sight,

And, that we come to celebrate, who can but say 'tis right?

E'en in our slav'ry we can trace the kindly hand of God,
That took us from our sunny land, and from our native sod,
Where tropic birds their matins sing, and, sweet the stream-
lets flow,
And kindly Nature sweetly smiles upon the vales below.

Where scented zephyrs fan the cheek, and heav'nly music
swells,

And God's own matchless finger paints the lovely hills and
dells;

There sweetest music fills the air, while beauteous Nature
smiles,

And every scene delights the soul, but only man is vile.

There, clad in Nature's simplest garb he roamed a savage
wild,

Untamed his passions, half a man, and half a savage child,
And knew not God, save, what in stones, the God of love
revealed.

The blessed Revelation was to him a message sealed.

And God to teach him His dear will saw fit to bring him
where

He learned of Him and Jesus Christ, those lessons rich and
rare;

He made the savage into man tho' moulded by the rod,
And, Ethiopia has, indeed, stretched forth her hands to God.

He was a man, and felt as men, his soul with anguish burned,
His heart with deep pulsations beat, and indignations spurned:
But God still held him to the blast, and still afflicted sore,
And still he groaned, and still he prayed, yet still his burden bore.

But, like the cries of Israel old, his prayers ascended high,
And reached the great Jehovah's throne, beyond the azure sky,
And His own power brought freedom down, and broke the chain, despair,
And bade the Negro walk with men, as free as Nature's air.

But was he true? speak Bunker Hill! and Boston Common say,
Did he defend from British foe on that historic day?
While thousands stood with heaving breast and dared not strike a blow,
A Negro's voice then cheered the throng, and bade them charge the foe.

His blood was spilled to gain a place in battle's honored roll,
And Crispus Attucks stands aloof among the heroes bold,
And when we speak of valiant deeds and love of country fair,
We not begrudge his well-bought fame, but place a laurel there.

And in the dark and bloody days, when thick the battle rolled,
And North and South had gathered arms and called each other foes,
A soldier brave upon the field, a faithful slave at home,
He disdained to mar the name of loved ones left alone.

But as a faithful watch-dog stands and guards with jealous
eye,
He watched his master's wife and child and at the door would
lie
To shed his blood, if need should rise and one had come to
mar
The peace of those whose father went to fight in cruel war.

To-day is hushed the cannon's roar and peace reigns every-
where,
And blessed freedom makes our land the fairest of the fair;
Shall we who helped to make it bloom and blossom as a rose,
Be cast aside, unworthy of a place upon its sod?

We love her and are loyal as the truest of her sons,
For her our blood was shed, for her, so oft our tears have
sprung,
We'll strive to have her take her place the first of any land
Stand ready to defend her soil from any alien band.

But God has freed us and to Him we bow in praise to-day,
He'll never leave us nor forsake but will protect alway,
And, conscious of a heart that's true with purpose brave and
strong,
We leave our case in those just Hands that can not do a wrong.

'Tis here our eyes beheld the light, and, here at evening's
close,
We hope to wrap our mantles 'round and take our last repose,
No politicians should divide relationships divine
No arm should sever friendships formed "in days of auld lang
syne."

'Tis the blessing that we celebrate and not the cause now lost,
For that was dear to other hearts as this can be to us,
And who were right, or who were wrong, we are not here to
say,
For—still in death—they're heroes all, the blue, likewise the
grey.

And now the din of battle past, they are our friends the same,
Not such as come to get our votes, not friends in only name,
But friends, who deep in honest hearts, but wish our highest
joy,
God grant it may ne'er severed be, but last without alloy.

Then let us all with one accord now join the jubilee,
And praise our God the ruler of the new land of the free,
And babes unborn, in future years, will rise to call us great,
For fixing now for coming time "The Day We Celebrate."

The Owls' Song.

[Written for The Owl Club of Richmond, Va., and sung at its Thanksgiving Dinner, November, 1888.]

Bird of the night! to thee,
Perched on the forest tree,
Our song we raise;
Thy deeds we celebrate,
And thy great works narrate,
Thy fame we advocate,
In notes of praise.

The turkey may be sweet,
And many birds you meet
Are splendid "fowls;"
Not e'en the eagle bold,
Nor birds with plumage gold,
Nor song birds, young or old,
Can touch thee, owl.

And whence comes thy great name,
Bird of the noble fame!
Of being wise?
'Tis for thy silent tongue,
That oft thy praise is sung,
And oft thy name is rung
Up to the skies.

And many a man's called smart,
Who takes the screech-owl's part,
And holds his tongue;

And then men call him wise,
Though he is "otherwise,"
And laud him to the skies,
His praise is sung.

So we are festive owls,
And like that best of "fowls,"
When day declines;
Abroad we soar at night,
To scenes of joy and light,
To have, while life is bright,
A jolly time.

“Hope.”

[To my Sunday School Class—Set to music and sung at Commencement Exercises, June 22d, 1893.]

When evening shades, the night's fair warning,
Doth gild the spires with its fond lingering rays,
The sun's last tint is hope's bright dawning,
The gloom will pass, the night shades fade away:
Bright hope gives warning,
Of daylight's dawning,
When gloom is past, night's darkness chased away.

When sorrow, care, and pain unceasing,
Beset our pathway and our souls appall,
We still can trust that love increasing,
That gilds the stars, yet, marks the sparrows' fall.
That love imploring,
Our trust enduring,
Shall pierce the gloom by faith in Him our All!

When Death's dark night its shadows gather,
Hope brightly beams and sheds her cheering rays;
What e'er betide we trust our Father,
Who clothes the fields with flowers in bright array.
Through ages winging,
His praises singing,
New life shall dawn with heaven's eternal day.

De Nigger's Got to Go.

[Written for the RICHMOND PLANET on the occasion of a bill being offered in Congress to transport all Negroes to Africa.]

Dear Liza, I is bin down town,
To Massa Charley's sto',
An' all de talk dis nigger hear
Is—"niggers got to go:"
I 'fess it boddens my ole head,
An' I would like to kno',
What all we cullud folks is done,
Dat now we's got to go?

I hear dem say dat long ago,
To ole Virginny's sho',
Dar kum a ship wid cullud folks,
Some twenty odd or mo',
Dey tells me dat dey hoed de corn,
An' wuz good wuckers sho';
Dey made Virginny like de rose,
But now dey's got to go.

Dat, when ole Ginnel Washington
Did whip dem red coats so,
A nigger wuz de fus to fall,
A-fightin' ub de foe;
Dat in de late "unpleasan'ness"
Dey watched at massa's do'
Proteckin' ub his lubin' ones,
But now we's got to go.

I 'fess I lubs dis dear ole place,
'Twuz here we buried Jo',
An' little Liza married off
So menney years ago,
An' now wez feeble, an' our lims
Is a-gittin mighty slo',
I'd hate to lebe dis dear ole place
But den wez got to go.

I don' kno' much 'bout politicks,
An' all dem things fur sho',
But de las leckshun I jes vote
Like de white folks tole me to;
Dey tole me vote for Dimikrats
An' 'twould be better sho',
But now dey don de leckshun win
But dey sez we's got to go.

Dey sez de white folks mad long us,
Kas wez-a-kummin up you kno',
An' sum un us is gittin' rich,
Wid do' bells on de do':
Dat wez get lawyers, doctors too,
An all dem things fur sho':
But den, it kan be jes for dis
Dat we all got to go.

De Lord he made dis lubly lan'
For white an' black folks too,
An' gin each man his roe to ten,
Den what we gwine to do?
We habes ourselbes, an' 'specks de laws,
But dey's peckin' mo' an' mo'
We aint don nuffin tall to dem,
Den huc-kum we mus' go.

Fur ebry nashun on de glob'
Dis seems to be a hom',
Dey welkums dem wid open arms,
No matter whar dey from
But we who here wuz bred an born,
Don' seem to hab no sho';
We hoped to make it what it is,
But den wez got to go.

It 'pears to me, my Liza dear,
Wez got a right to stay,
An' not a man on dis brod uf
Gwine dribe dis nigger way;
But why kan white folks lef us lone,
An weed dar side de roe,
An what dey all time talkin' 'bout
'De nigger's got to go?'

"But Rastus," Liza sed, "Trus' in God,
He'll brung things right fur sho',
He don' hate us bekase wez black,
He made us all you kno';
He lubs us if wez cullud folks,
Our hearts is white an puh
An' less de Lord sez, forward march!
Wez not a gwine to go."

I Can Trust.

[Written for the YOUNG MEN'S FRIEND.]

I can not see why trials come,
And sorrows follow thick and fast;
I can not fathom His designs,
Nor why my pleasures can not last,
Nor why my hopes so soon are dust,
But, I can trust.

When darkest clouds my sky o'er hang,
And sadness seems to fill the land,
I calmly trust His promise sweet,
And cling to his ne'er failing hand,
And, in life's darkest hour, I'll just
Look up and trust.

I know my life with Him is safe,
And all things still must work for good
To those who love and serve our God,
And lean on Him as children should,
Though hopes decay and turn to dust,
I still will trust.

The Baby Show.

[Written for SOCIAL DRIFTS.]

Babies large, and babies small,
And babies fat and fair;
The fond mammas and dear papas,
Had all the young ones there.

The "Dispatch" man came and viewed the scene,
And decided in a minute,
That the infant with the "kinky-top"
Was certainly not "in it."

Perhaps to some this argues ill,
And some, no doubt, are frightened,
But to my mind it demonstrates,
We are simply being ENLIGHTENED.

"If I Should Die."

[Written for the NEW YORK AGE.]

If I should die, and ne'er again
Behold the daylight dear to me,
Nor press the hand that once caressed,
Nor hear the voice of tenderness,
That spake in softest tones and free;
If I should die, would any heart
Feel for my lost ? Would any deed
Of kindness wrought for ones in need
Rise up to bless me in the grave ?

How have I lived ?—for self alone,
Or for the good of those around,
Who soon may list to hear a sound,
From these my lips—then still in death ?
Will children come to strew around
"Forget me not" upon my tomb ?
Or shall I go "Unwept, unhonored and unsung,"
From earth fair face when death shall come
To claim me for its own,
And my dear ones be left alone.

I can not tell, but still must hope,
As does the meanest beggar found,
That to some heart my silent grave
Shall be enchanted ground, where oft
At evening's close fond feet may stray

To drop a tear: God grant it may
When I shall sleep in death's embrace,
Though safe "At home" I still would trust
That, to some heart, my silent dust
Shall mem'ries wake of sweetest strains.

When mute the lips, how soon forgot,
And tangled weeds but mark the spot,
Where sleeps the last of mortal clay:
And still the stars their vigils keep,
While night birds coo their mournful lays.
Good deeds live on; alone they shine,
And brighter grow 'mid coming years,
God's record fair; and when at last
The trump of God shall sound, white
Robes await the just and ransomed there.

De Linin' ub De Hymns.

[Written for the RICHMOND PLANET.]

Dars a mighty row in Zion an' de *debbil's gittin' high*,
 An' de *saints* done beat de *sinner*s, a-cussin' on de *sly*;
 What for it am? you reckon, well, I'll tell how it 'gin
 Twuz 'bout a *mighty leetle thing*, de *linin' ub de hymns*.

De *young folks* say taint *stylish* to *lin' out* no mo',
 Dat *dey's* got *edikashun*, an' dey wants us all to know
 Dat *dey* likes to hab dar *singin' books* a-holin' fore dar eyes,
 An *sing de hymns right straight along* to mansion in de skies.

Dat it am *awful foggy* to gin um out *by lin'*,
 An' ef de ole folks will kumplain 'cause dey is ole an' blin
 An' slabry's chain don kep dem back from larnin how to read,
 Dat *dey mus'* take a *corner seat*, and let de *young folks* lead.

We *bin* peatin' *hine* de pastor when he sez dat lubly pray'r
 Cause some un us *don kno' it* an' kin not say it squar,
 But dey sez we *mus' peat wid* him, an' ef we kan keep time,
 De gospel train will drap us off from follin' long behin'.

Well p'haps dez's right, I kin not say, my lims is growin' ole,
 But I likes to sing dem dear ole hymns 'tis *music to my soul*,
 An' 'pears to me twon't do *much* harm to gin um out *by lin'*,
 So we *ole folk* dat *kin not read* kin *foller long* behin'.

But few ub us am lef here now dat bore de slabry's chain,
 We don edekate our boys an' gals we'd do de sam' agin
 An *Zion's* all dat's lef us now to cheer us wid its song,
 Dey *mought* 'low us to *sing wid dem*, it kin not be fur long.

De sarmons high-falutin' an' de chuch am mighty fin',
We trus' dat *God still understans* ez he did in olden times;
When we do, ign'ant po an' mean still worshiped wid de soul
Do oft akross our peac'ful breas' de wabes ub trouble rolled.

De ole time groans an' shouts an' moans am passin' out ub
sight,

Edikashun changed all dat, and we beleive it right:

We should serb God wid 'telligence but fur dis thing I plead,
Jes lebe a leetle place in chuch fur dem as kin not read.

Drifted Apart.

[To M. E. H.]

'Twas years ago I met thee, when we both were young and
free,
And no thought of years of sadness filled our hearts;
But the years have found us drifting, in a sad neglected way,
Until to-day we've drifted far apart.

How often didst thou tell me, in the happy days long sped,
We were drifting, drifting, drifting far apart,
But I would not heed the warning, until the years now fled
Have left a pall of sadness o'er my heart.

But 'tis best that we are parted, it is best for you and me,
And not a tear of sorrow must now start;
For, if we two had wedded, we ne'er could happy be,
So 'tis best that we have drifted far apart.

Thou art wedded to another, and, perhaps some day I'll be,
When time has covered over every smart;
Good-bye, and may God bless you with a happy life and free,
E'en though we two have drifted far apart.

“The City of the Dead.”

[Read at the Richmond Cemeteries, Memorial Day, May 30th, 1888.]

The setting sun now gilds the evening sky,
And darkness settles over land and sea;
And birds and bees, aweary, homeward fly,
To seek their rest within the sheltering trees.

The honest lab’rers daily task is done,
And, home to rest the tired steed is led;
A solemn silence settles o’er each home,
And stillness greets “The City of the Dead.”

Sweet music floats upon the list’ning ear,
As to this long, last resting place we come,
To place upon each quiet mound so near,
Some sweet remembrance of the days now gone.

Upon each mound we drop a silent tear,
Upon each grave we place some flowers fair,
Whose leaves must fade and wither, year by year,
And die to leave not e’en a memory there.

Within these sacred grounds our dead are laid,
Who all life’s weary journey now have done;
Who—all their solemn debt to nature paid—
Now rest beneath the shade—with God at home.

Within these precincts silent forms repose,
Who hearts once burned with strong celestial fires;
Whose souls no more may deep ambition know,
But rest in silent gloom, both son and sire.

Near yonder stone an infant form doth lie,
Whose eyes scarce opened to the light of day,
E'er death in all its silent gloom drew nigh,
And bore its soul from realms of earth away.

Just there a child whose infant feet had trod
Upon the blooms of six or seven springs;
'Mid parents' tears and sobs was borne to God
On angel's fair and strong celestial wings.

Hard by a maiden turning in her teens,
A school-girl just from school and books away,
A youth in hope's young spring of blissful dreams
All borne aloft to realms of endless day.

There middle age, within life's brightest morn
That monster came to summon him away;
Of all his youth and joy and splendor shore,
And made a stiffened corpse in one brief day.

And, last of all, lies hoary-headed age,
That feel, "like autumn fruit that mellowed long,"
Whose hopes had fled; the withering fal'tring,
Who left in triumph for the realms of song.

Here high and low and wise and ignorant meet,
Here, side by side, both great and small repose,
Here he who toiled, and he who studied greet,
The grave no small, no wise, no ignorant knows.

Here they all meet whose mem'ries we hold dear,
Their works are done, their toils and cares are o'er,
The hopes are dead; the pine and faded sear
Now mark the spot, their forms are seen no more.

Scott Gwathney's here and Humphrey Osborne, too,
Their swords laid down, and gone the living breath,
And Brooks, that voice that once the hustings knew,
Now sleeps the long, last, silent sleep of death.

James Bowser's here, his earnest life work done,
And Robert Brown the countless thousands swell,
And Fitzhugh too, his checkered life race run,
Helps heap the mound where many loved ones dwell.

Our Maggie's here, whose music cheered our hearts,
And made the cares of life, so bitter, sweet;
Those fingers stilled to take no more their part;
And soldiers brave who fought, their end here meet.

And each of us can point to some dear spot,
Where friend or kindred rest in sweet repose;
Where we have wept and placed forget-me-nots,
And wreath-entwined the holly and the rose.

Rest on! brave souls! we would not call them back,
To this drear land, where sin and sorrow dwell;
Where pain and care are ever on our track,
And happy years, but toll a funeral knell.

Each year we'll come to strew upon their graves
Sweet flowers fair, until we too shall come,
From joys and griefs and hopes of earthly days,
To dwell with them within their silent home.

When we shall go from earth to realms of shade,
To take our places in the silent mound,
May others come to deck our silent graves,
And rise anew when God's last trump shall sound.

Stickin' To De Hoe.

Dar's mighty things agwine on,
Sense de days when I wuz young;
An' folks don' do ez dey did once,
Sense dese new times is kum;
Dey gals dey dresses pow'ful fin',
An all am fur a show;
But enny how dis nigger
Am a-stickin' to de hoe.

Larnin is a blessed thing,
An' good cloze mighty fin',
But I likes to see de cullud gal
What knows jes how to ine,
Gimme de gal to wash an' scrub,
An' keep things white an' clean,
An' kin den go in de kitchin,
An' cook de ham an' greens.

I ain't got no edekashun,
But dis I know am true,
Dat raisin' gals too good to wuck,
Ain't never gwine to do;
De boys dat look good nuf to eat,
But too good to saw de logs,
Am karrin us ez fas' ez smoke
To lan us at de dogs.

I spoze dat I'm ole fashun,
But God made man to plow,
An git his libbin by de sweat
Dat trickles down his brow;
While larnin an' all dem things
Am mighty good for sho',
De bes way we kin make our pints,
Is—stickin' to de hoe.

My Childhood's Happy Days.

To My Parents.

Many poets great and gifted whom the muse's touch had
blessed,
Have sung in rhythmic measure, at the spirit's high behest,
Of the days of childish glory, free from sorrow and from pain,
When all was joy and pleasure, and wished them back again,
But, somehow, when my mind turns back to sing in joyous
lays,
I remember great discomforts, in my childhood's happy days.

Why, my earliest recollections are of pains and colics sore,
And the meanest kinds of medicines the grown folks down
would pour,
Ipecac and paregoric, and though I hard would kick
They still would dose and physic "Cause the baby must be
sick!"
When I think of this how can I sing a song in joyous lays,
And speak in tones of rapture of my childhood's happy days.

Off to school I then was started and the simple rule of three
Was as hard as now quadratics or geometry's to me:
And then the awful thrashings, with a paddle at the school,
And again at home with switches if I broke the simplest rule,
Oh, my life was one vast torment, so, of course I'm bound
to praise
The time that poet's nickname "our childhood's happy
days."

On a cold and snowy morning, when lying snug in bed,
"You Webster" was the sound I heard, and wished that I
was dead;
For I knew I had to make the fires, bring water, and cut
wood,
And then, perhaps, I might have chance to get a bit of food,
When off to school I trotted: these were the pleasant ways,
In which I spent that festive time, my childhood's happy
days.

Father's breeches, cut to fit me, was, of course, the proper
thing,
And no where would they touch me, my one "gallus" was a
string,
I couldn't tell the front from back-part, and my coat of navy
blue,
So variously was mended, it would match the rainbow's hue;
'Twill do all right for rich white boys to sing those merry
lays,
But the average little "Jap" fared tough, in childhood's
happy days.

I had a tender place where I couldn't bear the comb to
touch,
I'd jump three feet when tested, at last I cried so much
Mother said that she would cut it, oh, fate! to see me
then,
My head was picked by dull shears as if some turkey hen
Had gotten in his cruel work, and the boys, with jolly
ways
Hallowed "buzzard" when they saw me in my childhood's
happy days.

In the evening holding horses, selling papers—"Evening News,"

To earn an honest penny, for the folks at home to use,
Yet, of course I had my pleasures, stealing sugar, playing ball,

But I can not go in raptures o'er that season after all,
And, we repeat our childhood, and all life's sterner ways
Are mixed with rain and sunshine, as were childhood's happy days.

Still I find that life's one "hustle" from the cradle to the tomb,

With occasional rays of sunshine to lighten up the gloom,
And if we can help a brother, and mix our cares with joys,
We'll find old age as happy as the days when we were boys,
And above may sing in rapture heavenly songs of love and praise,

When at last our bark is anchored there to spend our happiest days.

Good Night.

[To my Mother.]

Good night, the day is done,
And evening shadows softly fall;

Good night—

The night bird's gently cooing to its mate,
And slowly now the silv'ry moonbeams
Deck the evening sky with lovely rays:

Good night—good night.

Good night the day was long,
And weary feet now gladly say

Good night,

To toil and care as gentle sleep,
The "sweet restorer," softly steals
And fills our tired eyes; we gladly say

Good night—good night.

Good night earth's day must close,
And death's last summons make us say

Good night;

From pain and care of life's rude day,
At last we come to Jordon's brink,
And fly to realms of blissful dreams;

Good night—Good night.

Good night we fondly hope
To us that brighter day will dawn;

Good night;

May we so strive, and long and trust
And live in faith to see that eve,
When earth's last scene shall fade from view;

Good night—good night.

•

Ole Virginny Reel.

Ez I set to-night I'm thinkin' ub de days now pas' an' gone,
Way down in Ole Virginny mid de corn;
Whar de sweet pertaters bloomin' an' de watermillion
 smiles,
For down de souf in Dixie I wuz born.
Dat lan' to me is dearer den all on urf besiz,
An' I feel de tear drops down my ole cheeks steal,
Ez I think ub by gone plezuz in dat dear ole sunny lan',
A dancin' ub de ole Virginny reel.

When our daily toil wuz ober in de quarters we would meet,
An' sick annuder scufflin' dar would be
To git Miss Susan Johnsing, de Car'line County belle
To dance de fus set on de flo' wid me:
We'd "Walk ole John de blin' man," play "Husko ladies
 turn"
Would "Grin de bottle" or de "bobkin steal"
But twon't no use a talkin' de fun would jest begin
When all would dance de ole Virginny reel.

Ef you nebber seed de moshun, I'll tell you how it goes,
'Tis a bobbin up an' down a hop an' jump,
An' a turnin ebry lady ez you kum back down de line
Jes like a bobtail moc'sin roun' de stump,
"Miss Liza Jane" is lubly an' "Balmoral" is fine,
An' "Wipe dem di'mon winders" make you squcal,
But not "Bounce Aroun' my Sugar Lump" nor "Turnin
 Good Ole Man"
Kin begin to tech de ole Virginny reel.

Dar wuz "Jimmy Put de Kettle on" an' "Shoo Miss Piggie Shoo"

An' de play "King Willum wuz King Georges Son,"
"Blin' Man Buff" an' "Gimme corner" also "Walk de lone-
some Road;"

Whar de pint wuz gittin kisses suze you bon,
But now dey fuse to play it, an' kissin's out of style,
Bekase we folks is gittin pow'ful high,
Yet our kissin den wuz in'cent widout a bit of harm,
But now dey takes dar kissin' on de sly.

Ole 'Liz'ah wuz de bess man, he could cut de piggin wing,
An' crack his heels togedder keepin' time,
While his teef would look like tom'-stones, an' his face like
'possum fat,

An' ebry knot be stickin' out behin':
De gals would dress in homespun wid big ole brogan shoes,
An' ef dar feet would tech you, you would feel,
While de boys wore bed-tick breeches, but all dis wuz forgot,
Ez we 'joyed ourselbes wid ole Virginny Reel.

We wuz happy at a huskin' bee, a big molasses stew,
Or million-feas at closin' ub de day;
An' though our cares were menny, our plezuz mighty few,
We made de bes of all dat came our way.
An' now my banjos silent ez it hangs upon de wall,
My fiddle bow no longer gibbs its peal;
Fur my playin's too ole fashun fur de dancin' ub to-day,
An' I long agin fur ole Virginny reel.

An' somehow ez I think to-night ub by-gone happy days,
Though cares and sorrows menny crowned our lot,
Dis lesson presses on me—now forgib an' ole man's say,—
But alwaz joy de blessins what you got;

An' agin I some times wonder ez I see ya'll hoppin' roun',
Wid waltzes, dances, schoctische, toe an' heel
Ef you really hab de plezuz an' as leetle ub de sin,
Ez we in dancin' ole Virginny reel.





"THE NEGRO AS HE IS."

The Negro as He Is.

[Written for RICHMOND PLANET.]

Our speakers tell of progress,
And laud us to the skies,
Until we're so inflated
We can not hope to rise;
Unless some moral cyclone,
Shall tear the structure down,
And show the negro as he is,
And then ignore his frown.
For the truth must now be told,
And we all need speak it bold,
We must reconstruct our building,
Or twill find us in the cold.

Gross errors must be righted,
We should at once begin;
Tell Jacob of transgressions,
And Israel of her sins;
No more should songs of siren
Sweetly lull our souls to ease;
And peace proclaimed in Zion
When really there's no peace.
For the truth from earth must rise,
Justice, sleeping, ope her eyes,
We must know our true condition
And the remedy apply.

We boast of education,
But the masses still plod on,
In grossest superstition,
And for bread prefer a stone;
And some more highly favored,
Make their learning but a snare;
And are yet so mean and wretched,
That the stoutest hearts despair,
Some stand aloof to-day,
From those less learned than they,
And cannot see their brothers,
Still struggling on the way.

Bitter spite and petty jealousies
Exist on every hand;
Each Negro hates the other
And will injure all he can
The Negro who attempts to rise
Above the common mass:
He knows "he is dishonest,"
That "his progress can not last,
If a Negroe's word must go,
Lord bless us here below,
For we all are thieves and cut throats,
For we call each other so.

If you get a piece of property,
You're a rogue of deepest die:
If you remain in poverty,
You are sinning on the sly,
But if teacher or if preacher,
Good Lord, in mercy bless!
For you can not please creation,
Though you do your level best,

Our prayer book should be thus,
As we bow our heads in dust,
"From long-tongued, slanderous Negroes,
Good Lord, deliver us."

We recognize no leaders,
For we all are in the lead,
Oft religion is a mockery,
Notwithstanding church and creed;
We will not help each other
On the hustings or the mart,
And we feel each one a brother,
And help him bear his part:
Remembering as we go,
To bear a brother's woe,
And help him in the race of life,
While in this vale below.

Our foes are all united,
We, divided, can but fall,
And yet I fear we are our own
Worst enemies for all;
With solid front for God and right,
No foe can e'er avail,
For "Right is Right as God is God"
And justice must prevail;
Let our hearts be for the right,
Let our purposes unite;
We need not fear the fiercest darts,
For we must win the fight.

See the errors to be righted,
Lord! nerve us for the task!
Though dark the night, the dawning
Must come when night is past;

By sword, by pen we labor,
Trusting Him, whose love doth bend
Like the blessed bow of promise,
To lead us to the end.
We have men both good and true,
Noble men who dare and do,
Fight on till death, my brother,
Its summons sends for you.

Bakin an' Greens.

Suggested by Mr. Lewis H. Douglass.

You may tell me ub pastries an' fine oyster paddies,
Ub salads, an' croquets an' Boston baked beans;
But dars nuffin so temptin' to dis nigger's palate,
Ez a big slice ub bakin an' plenty ub greens.

Jes bile um right down so dey'll melt when you eat um,
Hab a big streak ub fat, an' a small streak ub lean;
Dais nuffin on uf you kin fix up to beat um,
Fur de king ub all dishes am bakin an' greens.

Den tak' sum good corn meal an' sif' it an' pat it,
An' put in de ashes wid nuffin between,
Den blow off de ashes, an' set right down at it,
Fur dars nuffin like ash cake wid bakin an' greens.

'Twill take de ole mammies to fix um up greasy,
Wid a lot ub good licker an' dumplings between,
Take all your fin' eatins I won't be uneasy,
Ef you'll lebe me dat bakin an' plenty ub greens.

Some folks go fur tuckey, an' some goes fur chicken,
But I lights up wid joy an' wid plejger I beams,
When I kum home from wuck an' a day ub hard pickins,
An' am greeted wid bakin, an' a big dish ub greens.

Rich folks in dar kerrage may fro de dus' on me,
But how kin I enby dem men ub big means,
Dey may hab de dispepsy an' do dey may scorn me,
Dey kant injoy bakin wid lots ub good greens.

You may put me in rags, fill my cup up wid sorrow,
Let joy be a stranger an' trouble my dreams;
But I still will be smilin' no pain kin I borrow,
Ef I still kin git bakin wid plenty ub greens.

Hoopskirts.

[Written for SOUTHERN NEWS.]

O cruel fate! again to bring,
Those awful things in season;
To make our girls, the lovely things,
Look big beyond all reason:
So slender now they seem and sweet,
Just fit for fond caresses,
Why should dame fashion now decree,
So to inflate their dresses.

The maidens, who are plump and fair,
Declare they will not wear them,
And even those now lean and lank
Are saying they can't bear them:
When fashion sends her edict forth,
They'll find they can not leave her,
And hoopskirts will be all the rage,
From Dan unto Beersheba

The slender train; the poor man's bane,
Is just about to leave us,
We say goodbye, and breathe a sigh,
The parting does not grieve us:
We can rejoice, our feet no more
Are tangled in the meshes,
To tear from bindings sweeping trains,
That spoiled our sweetheart's dresses.

The high hat too has had its day,
To blind our eyes from seeing
In hall or church whene'er we sat
Behind the lovely beings;
But, now alas, far worse than all
The ills from wife and daughter,
The crinoline now heaves in sight
To aggravate our torture.

What shall we do in street-cars
Now oft packed beyond all bearing
When crinolines need double room,
'Twill set the men-folks swearing.
Our sweethearts fair, we love so well,
Our hearts can but endear them,
But when the hoopskirt gets full sway,
How can we then get near them?

The slender girl may yet "get by"
And small hoopskirts come handy;
And even those of medium weight,
May yet look "chic" and dandy;
But, oh, my stars! the girl that's stout,
'Twill be more than a notion,
When crinolines will make her look
Like some balloon in motion.

But still we men will have revenge
For all the care you give us;
And oh, my dears you'll catch it "tough,"
Nor will it sadly grieve us:
For when a gale shall catch those skirts,
And set them all-a-flying,
We fear we'll burst a jugular vein
By laughing until crying.

A Rose.

[To Mrs. R. D.B.]

This rose of the garden is given to me,
And to double its value 'twas given by thee;
And its beautiful tints to my eyesight is borne,
Like a kiss of a fairy, or blush of the morn.

How sweet the aroma that is wafted to me,
Let the scent of the breeze of the isles of the sea;
And it tells of the care of that Father above,
Who sends us the flowers to tell of his love.

But too soon must this sweet-scented flower decay,
Its bright leaves must wither, its scent die away,
But its memory lingers and the joys that it bore,
Will remain with me fondly, when the flower's no more.

Fond hopes too may perish, their leaves fade and die,
And great expectations all withered may lie;
But He who has loved us and given his Son,
Sets a sweet bow of promise and bids us hope on.

May our friendship ne'er perish, its strength ne'er decay,
But may it grow stronger and stronger each day;
And may the All Father his love o'er us bend,
Till life's journey's completed, and heaven the end.

The Triumvirate.

[To Jos. H. Douglass, Violinist, Chas. E. Mitchell, Esq., Editor and Jas. E. Meriweather, M. D., on the occasion of a Thanksgiving Dinner tendered the author by them at the residence of Mr. Lewis H. Douglass, in Washington, D.C., Nov. 1892.]

Hail the illustrious three!
Gladly I sing to thee,
This song of praise:
Long may thy glory shine,
In every age and clime,
And may I claim thee mine,
In coming days!

Joe gives us music fine,
And "gets there" every time,
When e'er you call;
Charles is a "hustler" sure,
Jim is my friend of yore,
And each one I adore,
God bless them all!

That Canine.

[FROM SOCIAL DRIFTS.]

[To my friend G. S. on being chased by a dog while on a social visit.]
A Parody on the Burial of Sir Jno. Moore.

Not a drum was heard, not a funeral note,
As quick from that bull-dog he hurried;
Not a policeman was there to fire a shot,
As his teeth near his right leg were buried.

Quickly and lively he hurried away,
From that field—not of fame fresh and glory:
Not a “cuss word” escaped his closely pressed lips,
That dog was alone in his glory.

And slily he winked, as the seat of his pants,
That bull-dog sat quietly eating;
He remembers, no doubt, that storm-cloudy night,
And sighs with regret at that meeting.

A Christmas Wish.

[To L. E. S.]

"Peace on earth good will to men,"
How sweet that message angels sang,
Until again the welkin rang,
And heavenly voices shout "amen."

May that sweet peace, and blest good will,
Fill up the measure of your joy!
And give you peace without alloy,
And every hope and wish fulfill.

May love be thine this Christmas-tide,
And good will bless your every day,
And rest and peace be thine alway,
Until the heavens open wide,

And angels' voices sing for thee
The tenderest choral anthem sweet,
When in that blest abode we meet,
To rest through all eternity.

In Memoriam.

[John Cyrus Ferguson, M. D., born Nov. 29, 1850, died July 5, 1889.]

Sleep on, brave soul ! thy warfare o'er,
Thy rest comes sure and soon,
Thy sun, which rose at early morn,
Has passed away at noon;
As drops the flower when chilling frost,
But touch its tender leaves,
Thy brilliant life has passed away,
And left our hearts to grieve.

In many a home, when sorrow came,
And none but God could know,
Thy kindly touch applied the balm,
And soothed a brother's woe;
And "As ye did it unto these"—
How sweet these words must be
That softly fell from lips divine,
"Ye did it unto me."

And while our tears in sorrow fall,
Such grief no tongue can tell,
We stand resigned to his blest will,
Who doeth all things well;
And in the years, swift rolling by,
Thou wilt not be forgot,
For in our hearts for thee must bloom,
The sweet forget-me-not.

[To Willie L. Hamlin.]

[In SOCIAL DRIFTS.]

Rest on! brave heart,
Life's rude and weary warfare o'er
'Tis sweet to rest,
Where no sorrows come or cares oppress,
On that blest shore.

Thy work is done,
And in the bloom of youth and honor rich,
He's called thee home,
To rest beneath the shadow of God's throne,
No more to roam.

The Fellow This Will Fit.

[Dedicated to the "toughs" who disturb public gatherings.]

You may talk about your gallery gods,
And think you make a hit;
But there's nothing so mean on earth,
As the fellow this will fit.
His sympathies are with you,
His hands, his feet, his all,
You will always recognize him
By his aggravating squawl.
If you ever make a hit,
You will know it not a bit
By the awful clap and stamping
Of the fellow this will fit.

If your voice is weak and "sinful"
"Talk louder" he will cry;
If your ways are captivating,
He will hollow "you're to fly,"
He must join in the singing,
And will fill your soul with awe.
For generally his voice will sound
Just like a cross-cut saw:
But yet you must stand it,
Though it worries you a bit,
He must get in his ten cents' worth,
The fellow this will fit.

His nose is very "leaky,"
And he wipes it with his sleeve,
Or with a dirty handkerchief,
And would have you believe
That in a summer long ago-
In the good old days of old,
By accident he took a bath,
Likewise a dreadful cold
You can not make it "git"
Though you storm after it
For he's the boss dog of the show,
The fellow this will fit.

You may desire to listen,
To the music sweet and low,
Or to the voice of eloquence,
That softly, sweetly flow,
But that gallery chap is giggling,
Eating peanuts, or he snores,
To wake up at the wrong time,
Clapping louder than before.
I know you don't think it,
You won't believe a bit,
But really he has been to school
That fellow this will fit.

But 'tis at the big church concert,
That he worries people down,
When he gets up in the gallery,
When policemen are not around,
And hollows at the singers,
And disturbs the decent folk,
By his most outrageous conduct
That should shame a drunken blote,

'They say we can't stop it,
But I can't believe a bit,
For I believe the law should stop
That fellow this will fit.

His pantaloons are seedy,
With great big eyes behind,
His coat is slick and greasy,
To decency he's blind,
But some are starched and dudy,
But clothes don't make a man,
'Twill take brains to be decent,
They do the best they can:
I know you will do it,
And 'twill help us quite a bit,
To "chip in" and buy mule brains,
For the fellow this will fit.

Disappointment.

[Written for YOUNG MEN'S FRIEND.]

Our hopes of life of every hue,
At noon are dead and blasted,
Our fruits of life we often view,
Are gone ere we have tasted.
And fondest hopes of coming bliss,
So bright at morning seeming,
Ere evening gives its parting kiss,
We find them but a dreaming.

If love doth give a promise sweet,
So full of hope and yearning,
'Tis turned from blissful waters sweet,
While we its joys are learning:
If wealth or fame or great estate,
Doth fill our hearts with gladness,
Ere we enjoy the hope it brings,
Our joy is turned to sadness.

And what though some have reached the goal,
And in its sunlight's basking,
Their joys, alas, must soon be told,
Life is not everlasting.
And soon the icy hand of death,
Will come our lives to sever,
Oh, may we, at our parting breath,
But dwell with Christ forever.

That spark within that can't be stilled,
And tells that we're immortal,
Is but the soul, by heaven willed,
To live beyond life's portal.
Where bathed in streams of purest bliss,
God's love is o'er us bending:
Where we shall dwell with spirits bright
In Sabbaths never ending.

Then may we choose that life above
Where disappointments never
Invade the precincts filled with bliss,
With God to dwell forever.
Then take the world with all its joys,
So transient and so fleeting,
Be thine to choose that perfect kiss
From God's own Son in greeting.

There friend again will meet with friends
And loved ones, sadly parted:
There God shall wipe away our tears,
And heal the broken hearted,
There ne'er to part, we meet at last
Young lives and grey hairs hoary
And bathe in blessed seas of rest
Within the realms of glory.

My Love.

I loved, and earth far brighter seemed,
Than painter's art or poet's dream,
To me her smile was lovelier far,
Than summer noon or evening star:
And yet she loved me not, though I
Loved her so well I'd hope and sigh.

She smiled, and heaven seemed in that smile,
That every grief and care beguiled,
She frowned and death seemed better far,
Than frown from her my guiding star,
My life was spent twixt heaven and hell,
And still I loved her, ah, so well.

Some days to heaven my soul would fly,
On bended knee look to the sky,
And thank the gods who gave such bliss
Enfolded in a woman's kiss;
But ere I'd just begun to taste,
The gall and wormwood took its place.

My judgment told me 'twas in vain,
I'd kiss the rod, and love again,
The pangs I felt, the pains endured,
Too sacred far to be disclosed,
I thought 'twas fate and loved again
Though reason bade me be a man.

I thought this pain I must endure,
That love was love was forevermore,
That love once born could never die,
I've lived to prove that thought a lie,
Love must be tended, nourished, fed,
Or else some day you'll find it dead.

I often fought this demon strong,
Was oft defeated, oft disarmed,
But as the flowers need heat and rain,
To make them bud and bloom again,
So love that is so often spurned
At last will flee to ne'er return.

I found one day I'd broke my chain,
I tried to weld them back again,
I wished, and sighed, and prayed in vain,
The love had fled and the shell remained:
For e'en God's love when often spurned,
At last will flee to ne'er return.

Pomp's Case Argued.

[In answer to Pomp's Defense, by Miss Belle R. Harrison.]

Pomp stole dem breeches, an' 'lowed 'twont sin,
Cause he stole dem breeches to be baptised in;
But I douts dat brudders, less argify de cas'
Fur we can't hab de young lam's a-fallin' frum grace.

Ef er brudder is hongry, en a *chicken* on de roos',
Sets a *temptin'* ub de saints, why 'twont no use
Fur de callin' ub a counsel, cause de case am plain,
De chicken wuz de sinner an' deserbs all de blam'.

But *breeches* is diff'rent, an' stealin's mighty 'rong,
Cause you see he moughter borrowed sense his mem'ry aint
long,

An' *furgittin to return um* nobody could er say
Dat de brudder *stole* de breeches, tiz clear ez de day.

True, his moughter bin busted wid de seat towed out,
Fur it cert'ny is strainin' dis leadin' ub de shout,
But den he could er *patched* um an' wid coat tails long,
Could er cut a lubly figger dout doin' enny harm.

May be prid' wuz de kazhun, dar de debil tempts to sin,
An' his bedtick breeches won't good nuf fur him;
But I moves fur to sclude him fur he nebber had to ought.
Ef he stole dem breeches, *go an' git hiself caught.*

Skeetin' on De Ice.

[A Poetical Version of a true occurrence in Henrico Co., Va.]

At a little country meeting in a log house near the road,
The saints had duly gathered "fur de worshup ub de Lord;"
When "Bru Levi send de pulpit" cleared his throat, and
then began
"De spoundin' ub de scripshur, fur to cheer de spet'ual man."

I was a teacher in the county and was in duty bound
In attendance on the services, to help the brethren 'long;
Brother Levi was the pastor, and dispensed the gospel here
As he *misunderstood* it at twenty-five a year.

The day was warm and sultry, sleep was getting in my eyes,
When this most unique sermon filled me with intense surprise:
"My belubbed congregashun, I bin preachin' 'bout de possle,
An' took my tex' whar Paul poked his 'pistle at de Romans."

"But to-day I gwine to tell you 'bout de chillun ub de Lord,
When dey crossed de ragin' waters at de spokin ub de word.
I kno' ya'll long bin wondrin' how de chillun crossed de sea,
But tiz jes ez plan ez kin be, to er' spienced man like me."

"You see twus in de winter an' de water all wuz frez,
By de winde Marster sen dem 'strong nuf to raz de dead;
Now ya'll see de thing wuz simple, an' likewise very nic',
Fur all de chillun had to do, *wuz to skeet across on ice.*"

"But when ole Farro kum long wid dem hebby chayut wheels,
De ice jes gin away an' ole Farro had to frez."

This was hard on my intelligence as the teaching of the
school,

So I had to rise and say a word, although against the rule.

"Beg pardon, brother pastor, but geographies you know
Say this land is in the tropics where can be no ice or snow."

"I thanks you dough I does not like no sturbmence on dis
topic,

But in dem days 'twont no gogerfies, so cours dar wont no tropics."

Of course I was dumbfounded, the brethren said "amen,"
An thus he then concluded ere I could speak again,
When you gwine to cross de water you better take advice,
An' 'cep'n de Lord am wid you, *don't sket across on ice."*

Mat!

In the swamp by black gum, in a little log hut

Lived Mat,

The toughest little cuss in tatters and rags

At that.

"A reg'lar good for nothing," the neighbors all vowed,

Who would rob a hen-nest, not a melon he allowed

To remain in the patch yet we, but for that,

Liked Mat.

With his tatters all flying and a crownless hat,

Came Mat

Cross the hill by the cornfield and "sweet tater" patch

And that

Was a sign that "taters" and corn disappered,

For when Mat was about, why everybody feared,

But then when you saw him your sorrow changed that

For Mat.

For ten or eleven little brothers and sisters

Had Mat,

And his poor mother labored to feed and to clothe them,

At that

And work in the country, when you wash the whole day,

And receive but a quarter is mighty poor pay,

No wonder he was ragged and would steal at that,

Poor Mat!

Yet the world often wonders as it speeds on its way

At the Mats,

Who are reared in ignorance the world's "good-for-nothings"

But for that,

How many called better who've never felt the smart,

Of poverty's nettle can boast of a heart,

As free from guile and as tender, as that

Of Mat's!

De Chana Cup.

[A true incident that came under the eye of the writer.]

Our church had a meeting, where the brethren gathered
 To transact the business they had for the Lord,
 To turn out the lambs who had strayed from the sheepfold,
 And to take in repentants in accord with his word.
 The ax had been falling with impartiality,
 On drunkards and policy players of old,
 On sisters who'd fallen from pathways of virtue,
 And all who had wandered like sheep from the fold.

At last came a sister whose skirts were all muddy,
 With drabbling in sin all the days of her youth,
 Had been caught and excluded amid tears of the brethren,
 But now would return to the pathway of truth.
 "I am truly repentant, the Lord has forgiven,
 Since last month, when excluded, I've prayed night and day,
 Will you brethren forgive and restore me to fellowship?
 And with Jesus to guide I'll no more go astray."

"Bless the Lord!" said the brethren, "Amen!" said the
 sisters,

"Thank God, she's returning; I move take her in;"
 The motion was carried with great hallelujahs
 For the sister restored from the pathway of sin.
 Brother Slaughter waxed warm and spoke of the prodigal,
 And rejoicing in heaven o'er sinners returned,
 "Ef you fall do not woller, you kin tell a true Christian.
 Fur down in de hart sper'tial oil will burn,"

"De sister am good ez befo' if not better,
Fur dear is de lam's whin returned to de fol',
Ef you gwine to sin, jes be sho you don't woller,
An' youz sho ub de glory as de pigg in his hole."
Up spoke Bro. Van, "My brudder hole on dar!
Youze ressin de scriphur an' teachin' us wrong.
'Tain't better to wander dan keep de straight pafway
An' de Lord lubs de young lam's dat keep right along."

"I once had a chana cup I sot quite much sto' by,
One day bein' kerless I drapped on de flo',
I patched it wid glu' sah, and dough it hel' water,
It nebber did ring like it did befo':"
You may dribe in a nail right in dis here pos' here,
Den draw out de nail, *but de hole is still dar.*
You may bring your phar arm an' heal up de bu'n, sah,
But de schar will tell on you wharebber you are.

True de prodigal Son can got some fine close an' some vittles,
But long he'd bin starbin wid nuttin to whar,
While de boy dat stayed home got de bes' ub de pickin's
Wid lots ub fine raiment an' plenty to sphar.
You wimmen who stray from de pafway ub virtue,
May be 'sto'ed to de chuch an' your sins plastered o'er,
But like a bell without clapper mus' always remain, sah!
An dey nebber kin ring like de did befo.

Bro. Van told the truth: true we may be forgiven,
But the world looks askance and is hard and is cold,
To some sins, most especially departures from virtue,
So 'tis best not to fall to return to the fold;
But up in that land, where forgiving's forgetting,
In the beautiful light of eternity's shore,
The bells on earth broken: up there fully mended,
Again may ring out as they did before.

Light in Darkness.

[Written for the VIRGINIA BAPTIST.]

[Dedicated to Hon Fred. Douglass.]

Though dark the night, my brother,
And dreary clouds bedeck the evening sky;
No star appears, and cold the wind doth blow,
The night must pass; and then,
The morning comes apace.

What though 'tis dark, my brother,
Canst thou not look beyond the stygian gloom;
See one faint ray of hope to lighten up
The darkness of the sky?
And still canst see His face?

God is not dead, my brother,
On Him my soul in faith will lean,
In darkest hour, if he but light the way
No fear can chill, for still
His mighty arm can save.

I only fear the wrong, my brother,
With God and right I breathe defiance bold
To every foe: for we can battle down
The hosts of hell and sin,
And triumph o'er the grave.

Uncle Rastus and the Whisky Question.

[Written for RICHMOND PLANET.]

I don' 'hear dem rebolushuns 'bout whiskey en all dat,
But yu aint gwy nebber pas' um, I tells you dat right flat;
Don't let ya'lls smartnis fool you, en try to do too much,
Cause you jes gwy bring 'bout sturbance, en you tryin' to bus
dis chuch.

Ya'll know dat whiskey bin here long 'fore we wuz born,
En tain't nebber trubble 'nothin', better let wel nuf lone:
Size, Paul don tole you take it, jes fur de stomach's sake,
We cert'ny gwy bay de scripshur, den what ya'll speck to
make?

I hear ya'll kote dat scripshur, "ef eatin meat fen, don't eat,"
But Paul won't talkin' 'bout *whiskey*, 'cause he plint'ly
menshuns *meat*;

Dat drunkards khant reach hebbin, de guard wont let um in,
But dat don't mean wid whiskey, *but folks dat's drunk in sin*;

"Look not on de wine cup," is what de Word tells me,
Well don't dat mean to *drink* it? 'tis plain ez plain ken be.
But we 'cided 'fore we kum here to vote dat moshun down,
Cause we argued it at meetins we had all ober town.

In couse we'z pozed to dancin' en all dem no harm sins,
An' will turn um out like lightnin' ef tiz dem upper tens;
But all sich things ez drinkin', playin' policy en such,
"*Am far too trifflin' matters to jotch befor' dis chuch.*"

Old Normal.

[Written for the Alumni Association of the Richmond Normal School.]

Old time with its sycle and swift onward play,
For once has turned backward, we are children to-day;
And the world with its conflicts, its battles and strife,
Is forgotten in pleasures and mem'ries of life.

These lassies with puffs, bangs and frizzes, galore,
Are girls in short dresses, and white pinafores;
While the men with stiff collars and high beaver hats,
Are boys in short breeches, and patches at that.

As I stand up here reading I'm quaking with fear,
For I think 'tis Miss Stratton, whose footsteps I hear;
Or dear Mr. Manly, or sainted Miss Knowles,
Comes tripping behind me and ready to scold.

"You Davis, sit down there!" I fancy she calls,
While Miss Manly, Miss Hadley, Miss Patterson all
Come trooping before me; but one thing I know,
I can slip by Miss Bass, she's so awfully slow.

My name is still cut on the seat by the door,
I am trying to cut it much higher, you know,
But I wonder if fame can e'er give the joy,
I found at old Normal when I was a boy?

On the green field of life we are still playing games,
Our base-ball and foot-ball we are playing the same;
As of old, the great winners must play the game bold
With the earth as a foot-ball and heaven the goal.

Some now play a fine game, and ne'er get a fall,
Some play as the kickers, and others the *ball*;
If you fail in your kicking cling close to the shore,
For the world kicks much harder than Normal of yore.

Some make a home run, and multitudes shout,
While some strike a *grounder* and other strike *out*,
Though fallen and beaten we still must be men,
And try it to-morrow, to win if we can.

Our girls of Old Normal are still jumping rope,
But don't let it trip you and get your neck broke;
For few, like our mother, will help us, alas!
When once we have fallen from virtue's straight paths.

But well we remember no boyhood could last,
The world called for men, and we went to the task,
Some won and some failed, but in heart we are one,
God grant we're as true as when we begun.

Some fellows are lawyers and sending to jail,
Their poor fellow creatures, nor getting them bail,
While others are doctors and curing life's ills,
At least, if not curing, are sending in bills.

Some presidents, professors and teachers in schools,
And thrashing young urchins for breaking the rules,
Some maidens, some matrons, some happy papas,
With eight or ten young ones their pleasures to mar.

What though they are climbing the ladder of fame,
They are Ben, Dan or Bowler, Hayes, Johnston or James,
Though clouded with care and in dignity dressed,
They are Sallie and Julia, Rose, Anna and Bess.

Some fellows are down who stood in the van,
Maybe gone to bad, but they are ours the same,
Let's throw out a line to them sinking in crime
And allure them to virtue for dear "Auld Lang Syne."

But some fail to answer at calling of roll,
Our eyes fill with tears, they are missed from the fold,
But in glory we'll greet them when battle is done,
Pat, Walter and others will meet us—at home.

Let's recount o'er our battles, take courage and aim
To help on each other to honor and fame;
Nor suffer our banner to trail in the dust,
Or the bright sword of honor in scabbard to rust.

We think of our sorrows, we think of our joys,
And in this our re-union are again girls and boys;
Old time can not dampen our spirits so gay,
We'll laugh at his efforts, we are children to-day.

By this hallowed elysium our tent is now spread,
But soon to new duties, new paths we must tread,
The world calls for heroes, our race calls for men,
Unselfishness and true 'till bright heaven's the end.

Sweet Sabbath Bells.

[Written for the S. S. QUARTERLY.]

Sweet is the sound at Sabbath morn,
Of silv'ry bells, whose earnest peal
Doth call us from our home away:

O, glorious chimes!

Thy sound we love, of heaven born,
It calls us with its mute appeal,
From haunts of men, to praise and pray—

O, blessed time!

Now infant feet to school will tend,
To learn the way to heaven and God,
To fit them for that glorious place

Beyond the stars.

There thoughts of earth, with heaven blend,
And God is near, no more we plod
In toil and pain, no evil trace

Its beauty mars.

Ring out sweet bells! long at your call,
May young and old the pathway tread,
That leads to blissful realms above,

And God and rest.

And when no more we hear you call
May heavenly bells the message spread,
And bring us to eternal love,

Forever blessed.

I Wonder How This Is?

[Written for THE EDUCATOR.]

I'm not a bad fellow, but just "kinder midlin,"

Not a devil incarnate, nor saint dressed in white;
But "'bout half and half," with a sprinklin' of devil,
And enough of the angel to keep me near right.

Yet often I wander, my feet get entangled,
'Mid briers and quicksands too often I stray,
And often I wonder can I reach the pathway,
As sinful and crooked I oft lose my way.

Yet I went to a funeral, the chap was a "tough one,"
A gambler, a drunkard, he cheated and lied,
A deeply dyed rascal, but gave big donations,
So the preacher just fixed him all right when he died.

I went to the graveyard, and looked on the tombstones;
What lovely inscriptions! all praising the dead;
Everyone there was good, everyone had reached heaven,
I wondered where all the bad fellows were laid.

But thus goes the world, if you've friends or have money,
You are certain of heaven, your sins plastered o'er;
But the poor, seedy devils, who have empty pockets,
Nobody knows if you're in heaven or no.

Perhaps they are right, and maybe up yonder,
The wonder will be, not that we were bad,
But as good as we have been, 'mid all of the weakness,
And all the temptations that each must have had.

But we'll find lots of folks we thought were in heaven
Have missed it, while others, assigned down below,
Are exalted, for there full justice is given;
By the heart God judges the rich and the poor.

Champion of Right—Good Night.

[To Dr. J. C. Price.]

Champion of right! Good night,
The day is gone, and death's dark hands
The sable curtain draws;
The stars shine forth from out the gloom,
And all is calm and still.
The pulse's throb is hushed—farewell,
The lights put out that shone with tender glow,
And hushed the voice that once the hustings knew,
And still the world moves on,
As if no hearts were crushed and bruised.

Champion of right—farewell,
The labor done 'tis sweet to have repose,
Beneath the welcome shade;
As darkest night bring out the stars,
May now new heroes rise,
Nor let the banner trail—good bye,
Thy noble deeds for God and race must live,
While honest hearts will-well-earned tribute give,
A hero in the strife takes rest,
Strife past, now comes the crown.



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"GINGER SNAPS AND CIDER."

Ginger Snaps and Cider.

[Written for Christmas Number of RICHMOND PLANET.]

Again the Christmas time is here,
With joy in fullest measure;
And every fellow, great and small,
Is looking out for pleasure.
To me the days no brighter seem,
Although my vision's wider,
Than when I was a country lad,
With ginger snaps and cider.

And when 'twas near "hog killin' time,"
The world seemed to me bigger,
For christmas then was on the way,
When I could cut a "figger."
Most homely were the joys we had,
"Molasses stews" and "parties,"
But innocent the joys they gave,
With fun both pure and hearty.

Long past are now those simple joys,
But with the Christmas season,
I wonder if I'm happy now,
And with as good a reason.
I wonder if my heart's as free,
Now since my vision's wider,
As in those by-gone Christmas days,
Of ginger snaps and cider.

Am I now deaf to sorrow's cry,
And pass the poor unheeding?
Do I, in honor, wish them joy,
For which my heart is pleading?
Do I delight to bring a smile,
And hearts, cast down, to brighten,
And think as much of others' woes,
And help their lots to brighten?

As came the "God-man" from above,
To Bethl'hem's lowly manger,
To seek and save the wan'dring sheep,
The homeless and the stranger;
So be it ours some heart to cheer,
As comes this time of pleasure,
And fill the cup of lonely ones,
With joy in fullest measure.

Some sit to-day in gilded halls,
Secure from seeming troubles,
While others, with a single crust,
Are shivering in their hovels.
We wonder oft why this is true,
But life, at best, is fleeting,
And oh! what recompense will come
With heaven's eternal meeting.

I sometime think we're growing up
To be a wondrous people,
But yet I fear in building
We're commencing with the steeple,
Without a basis, broad and deep,
With virtue its foundation,
And truth and right as corner-stones,
We can not build a nation.

On social hops and fancy balls,
Society now fattens;
But still I find oft little souls
Doth dwell neath silks and satins.
Hypocrisy, deceit and lies,
May mean our scope is wider,
But give me honest truth and love,
With ginger snaps and cider.

THE END









